

PRIVACY

By **Angela DeBose**

University of South Florida

Abstract:

The Division of Student Affairs, Office of the General Counsel, and Office of the Registrar at the University of South Florida developed and implemented a comprehensive privacy policy and procedures to address privacy issues regarding use of personal information. Policy formulation included a detailed review of third party relationships and contracts, release practices of other institutions, and broad input from university constituents (e.g. University Advancement, Administrative Services, etc.) concerning the proper use of institutional data.

Executive Sponsor:

Dr. Harold Nixon, Vice President, Student Affairs

Other Sponsors:

Mr. Marcus Snow, Jr., Assistant General Counsel, Office of the General Counsel

Dr. Michael Rierson, Vice President, University Advancement

Mr. Douglas Hartnagel, Associate Vice President, Enrollment Planning & Management

Ms. Angela DeBose, University Registrar

Implementation Team:

Mr. Christopher Cobb, Associate Registrar

Ms. Eva Christensen, Assistant Registrar

Mr. Jason Lehman, Web Development

Ms. Lynda Brackin, Forms Development

Ms. Regina Gainey, Public Information

Introduction of the Organization:

The University of South Florida is a multi-campus national research university that supports the development of the metropolitan Tampa Bay Region, Florida, and the nation. Since opening for classes in 1960, USF has developed into one of the nation's major public research universities. USF is classified as Doctoral/Research Extensive by the Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching, and is ranked among the top 100 public research universities in the annual report "The Top American Research Universities." The University receives more than \$200 million a year in external funding to support research and development projects. With 39,000 students from all 50 states and 116 countries, USF awards more than 4,650 bachelor's degrees and 1,700 master's degrees annually on campuses in Tampa, St. Petersburg, Sarasota/Manatee, and Lakeland. The University confers more than 160 doctorates in 32 fields and more than 90 Doctor of Medicine degrees a year. In its short history, USF has awarded more than 180,000 degrees.

The University of South Florida is committed to serving the people of Florida and the Tampa Bay Region and is dedicated to excellence in Teaching, Research, Service, and Community Partnerships that build upon unique strengths inherent in Florida's population, location, and natural resources. (Excerpts from Strategic Plan 2002-2007.)

Statement of the Problem/Initiative:

In recent years, there has been increased concern from incoming and continuing students about the privacy of their personal information. Students are keenly aware of the data collection and information exchange that occurs at institutions of higher learning. Transmission of personal data to vast numbers of recipients can occur easily and be produced on both printed and electronic media. The legislative actions occurring at both the federal and state levels have heightened the concerns of students—many of whom believe institutions do not adequately protect the privacy of personal information. Also, while students have some control over the disclosure of information from their education record under the Family Educational Rights & Privacy Act (FERPA), many students believe that FERPA is too restrictive since the Act limits all disclosures, except those provided for under law.

The Vice President of Student Affairs at USF led the privacy effort and championed the notion that the security and privacy of student records should be of the “utmost concern”. He recommended promulgation of a policy that would give clear indication to the public that privacy is an institutional concern that will receive importance as a priority of USF. The Vice President of Student Affairs viewed this as an important step in the interest of openness and building trust with students.

Design:

The Privacy project involved the components below.

Policy Adoption.

1. Provides for complete non-disclosure for students who have requested privacy or non-disclosure under FERPA.
2. Informs students at the beginning of the academic year that they have the option to request “confidentiality” to limit disclosures, as an alternative to privacy under FERPA. Specifically, by “opting out”, students can limit usage or sharing of their data with non-university officials or agencies that have a relationship with USF but do not fulfill any academic or student-related service.
3. Excludes from electronic files or printed media the records of all students who have requested either privacy or confidentiality.

Policy Implementation.

The actions below were completed over a two month period:

- Dissemination of Privacy letter to all enrolled students after the start of the term, informing them of the new policy and the ability to request confidentiality to “opt out” of personal disclosures (attached)
- Creation of an on-line Web page to allow students to update their level of disclosure (<http://www.registrar.usf.edu/privacy>) through the 3rd week of the term. No third party disclosures will be provided until the deadline is passed.
- Distribution of an e-mail acknowledgment to students that their request was received and processed:
“Your request to update your Privacy was received and processed. Please keep this communication for your records. For confirmation, please visit our website at <https://www.registrar.usf.edu/privacy/>. Your level of privacy currently in effect will display. Please contact the Office of the Registrar via e-mail at regquest@admin.usf.edu if you have any questions.”
- Modification of the existing privacy form to include confidentiality as well as definitions that explain all levels of disclosure (attached)
- Creation of a secure view that selects directory information items only of students who have not requested non-disclosure
- Development of a database procedure to update individual student records, specifically if the records are selected in filling public records requests. While

recordkeeping of disclosures to parties seeking directory information is not required, this is being implemented to address privacy concerns or complaints received from individual students and to provide a mechanism for greater controls and safeguards over data (test record attached)

Benefits:

- Increased Student Satisfaction. To date, the number of enrolled students on privacy has increased from 2% to 5%. The Office of the Registrar has received a number of positive communications from students and shared them with the Best Practices Committee. This change has created a climate of trust in that students have greater confidence in the University to protect/safeguard their personal, sensitive, and confidential information items. In addition, an article was written for the USF student newspaper, the Oracle. Though a balanced article was written, students are largely supportive of the new policy. The article can be accessed at site:

<http://www.usforacle.com/vnews/display.v/ART/2002/09/30/3d9844f9eaf34>

- Increased Campus Awareness of Privacy Issues and Concerns. Students are more aware of their rights to limit disclosure of personally identifiable information contained in university records. Faculty and staff also have greater awareness of records security and confidentiality. All seem genuinely pleased that the new policy adequately addresses the needs of the institution and is flexible enough in responding to their needs for access and information.
- Increased Efficiency in Handling and Tracking Third Party Releases. Third parties are urged to not re-disclose personally identifiable information. Each request is filled with the following statement attached: *This information is being provided to you for the one-time requested purpose only. Please be advised that the University of South Florida Office of the Registrar declines to release or sell to the public any student information, student lists, mailing labels or other education record that is not deemed 'Directory Information'. Charges associated with the attached file are to defray production costs involved in its creation. If an explanation of why the list is not a public record is required, refer to the following: USF student information is exempt from the requirements of the Florida Public Records law pursuant to the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act and Florida Statute sections 228.093 and 240.237. If this information is inappropriately released to any other party, future requests for directory information will not be fulfilled.*
- Improved Recordkeeping of Disclosures and Requests for Disclosures.

Retrospect:

The cost of implementation (\$20,000) was funded entirely by the Office of University Advancement, since this unit benefits primarily from having access to potential donors, etc. The only change might involve eliminating this hard cost in the future by e-mailing the annual notification to students rather than sending through the US mail. While all students are assigned a university e-mail account, a significant number have not activated their e-mail. As use of the USF e-mail address increases or at least students activate and route their e-mail to their favorite hot mail account, this will become a more viable option.

PROCESS: Processing Student Privacy Requests FORMS: SPACMNT, SPAPERS, SUAMAIL

Introduction

This process is used by the Office of the Registrar to place active student records on varying degrees of privacy to indicate whether or not a student's directory information may be released. Requests are received either in hard copy or electronically through discreet e-mail via a Registrar's Office website.

The matrix below lists the five levels of privacy available and forms that must be updated when a request is received. A student may choose only one.

LEVEL	SPAPERS Confidentiality Checkbox	SPACMNT	SUAMAIL
None	Blank	No Record	Yes
Basic Confidentiality	Blank	EXC	Yes
Privacy Except Commencement	Checked	IHP	Yes
Complete Privacy	Checked	ICP	Yes
Permanent Privacy	Checked	IPP	Yes

Instruction

- From Products Menu, select Student System
- Select General Person Module
- Select Person Comment Form – SPACMNT

The screenshot shows the 'Comment Form SPACMNT 5.2 (PROD)' window in the 'SCT Banner - PROD' application. The form contains the following data:

- ID: 123456789
- Name: Mock, Molly P.
- Comment Type: EXC (Exclude from 3rd Party Release)
- Confidentiality:
- Originator: [Redacted]
- Last Updated by: CCOBB
- Add Date: 21-JUL-2002
- Activity Date: 21-JUL-2002
- Appointments: [Redacted]
- Contact: [Redacted]
- Contact Date: 21-JUL-2002
- Appointment Time: [Redacted]
- Comments: [Empty text area]

At the bottom of the window, the status bar indicates 'Record: 1/1' and 'List of Values <NSC> <DRG>'. The taskbar shows the Start button and several open applications, including 'Inbox - Microsoft...', 'SCT Banner - PR...', 'PrivacyDocument ...', and 'USF Documentati...'. The system clock shows 1:50 PM.

- Enter Student ID in key block, display student record in main block of the form.
- IF student has no existing privacy record, enter appropriate code in Comment Type
- Save record, User ID, Add Date, Contact Date and Activity Date will be automatically.
- IF student has an existing privacy record, update the comment type as appropriate.
- Save record, User ID and Activity Date will be automatically updated.
- Exit SPACMNT.

- Select the General Person Form - SPAPERS from the General Person sub-menu.
- Update the 'Confidentiality' checkbox as appropriate. Refer to matrix above.

SCT Banner - PROD

File Edit Options Block Item Record Query Oracle Error Message Window Help

Options

General Person Form SPAPERS U5.2A (PROD)

ID: 123456789 Mock, Molly P.

Gender: Male Female Not Available

Date of Birth: 01-JAN-1950 Age: 52

SSN/SIN/TFN:

Confidentiality

Citizen: C Citizen (USA)

Ethnic: W White Non-Hispanic

Marital:

Religion:

Legacy:

Vet File No:

Veteran Category: None

Deceased

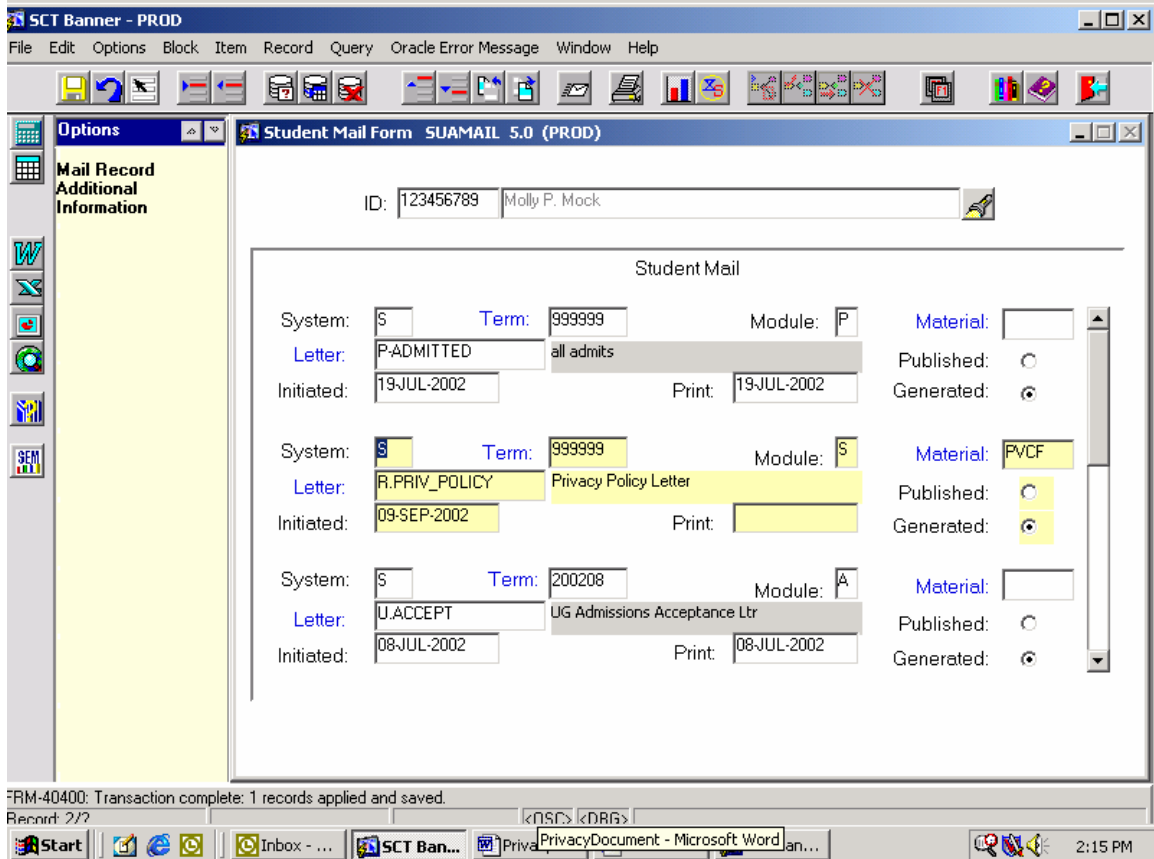
Deceased Date:

Check for Reporting and Query Selection Confidentiality.

Record: 1/1

Start | Inbox - Microsoft ... | SCT Banner - PR... | PrivacyDocument ... | USF Documentati... | 1:58 PM

- Exit SPAPERS.
- Access SUAMAIL through the Direct Access field above the General Person Menu.
- Query the form to display student communication record.
- Insert new record. **System Code** S and **Term Code** 999999 will default.
- Tab to **Module** field, enter S for Student System.
- Tab to **Letter** field, enter R.PRIV_POLICY. This will generate a letter to the student confirming their privacy request has been received.
- To generate a letter confirming the privacy request has been processed, tab to **Material** field and enter PVCF.
- Highlight **Generated** radio button
- Save record



- Exit SUAMAIL.
- Repeat steps to process next privacy request.

August 23, 2002

Dear Student:

Welcome to the University of South Florida for the Fall Semester 2002. We're very glad to have you continue your education and take part in an exciting time at USF. I write to share with you an important option that is now available to our students.

USF takes seriously the security and privacy of student records. We realize both the importance and impact of our data collection and usage activities on our students. In the interest of openness and building trust with our students, the University has recently adopted a change in its privacy policy. The intent of this change is to afford students the right to limit data usage and sharing of their information (i.e. "opt out"), without having to request non-disclosure of their directory information under the Family Education Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA). With the recent concerns expressed about privacy nationally, FERPA is not considered to be a "flexible" option by many students. The Act is considered too restrictive in that it does not allow for *any* disclosures except those required by law—not even confirmation of attendance or enrollment at the institution!

The new policy change allows you to request "confidentiality" to prevent your personal contact information (i.e. name, address, telephone) from being disclosed to outside marketing agencies, organizations or vendors that have a relationship with USF but do not fulfill any academic or student related service. However, please note that disclosures that require verification of your enrollment, dates of attendance, and degrees awarded, etc. would be permitted under the new policy.

If you wish to request "confidentiality" to prevent your personal contact information from being disclosed, please visit our website at <http://www.registrar.usf.edu/privacy> and follow the steps. Your request must be received within the first four weeks of the term to withhold your contact information from the University Directory. Note that if you are already on privacy under FERPA, your status will be preserved without any further action on your part.

Please contact the Office of the Registrar by e-mail at regquest@admin.usf.edu, by telephone at (813) 974-5813, or visit us in person at SVC1034 on the Tampa Campus. We would be pleased to answer any of your questions or provide further assistance.

Sincerely,

Angela DeBose
University Registrar